



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR SECRETARY RECOMMENDS PROPOSED ANWR LAND EXCHANGES

Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel today announced that he has recommended the proposed exchange of Native-owned inholdings in seven Alaskan national wildlife refuges for limited oil and gas interests in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

A Record of Decision recommending that the exchange proposals be ratified in any legislation directed at opening the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas activities was signed by Hodel today and sent to the jurisdictional committees in the Congress.

Hodel emphasized that the proposed land exchanges are contingent upon Congressional authorization of an oil and gas leasing program for ANWR, as well as Congressional ratification of any exchanges.

The proposed land trades would result in the acquisition of about 896,000 pristine acres of inholdings in seven Alaska national wildlife refuges. Alaska Native corporations would trade those lands for limited oil and gas interests in approximately 166,000 acres in the coastal plain.

In 1980, Congress directed the Interior Department to assess the petroleum potential and study the wildlife resources of 1.5 million acres of the coastal plain of the 19-million-acre wildlife refuge in northeastern Alaska. In June 1987, Hodel reported to Congress that studies indicate the area may have vast quantities of oil and gas, and that these resources could be explored and developed while ensuring the protection of the wildlife values of ANWR. The Secretary recommended an environmentally sound leasing program for the 1.5 million acres.

While petroleum assessment and wildlife studies were being conducted, the office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks conducted separate negotiations with six Alaska Native corporations concerning possible land exchanges that would benefit the National Wildlife Refuge System and provide the Natives an opportunity to share in revenues if the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain does have significant quantities of producible oil.

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